

Church Authority
NOT AN
UNIVERSAL SUPREMACY.

A FOURTH
CHARGE
Deliver'd to the
CLERGY
OF THE
ARCH-DEACONRY
OF
MIDDLESEX.

By R. ALTHAM, D. D. *Arch-Deacon*
of Middlesex.

With a Preface concerning private Judge-
ment of Discretion.

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Church Authority

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An Universal Supremacy, &c.

Reverend Brethren,



SINCE the Force of Truth has so far prevail'd with those, who have been the first Occasion of renewing this Controversy amongst us, concerning Church Powers, and the Exercise of them ; that upon more mature Consideration they have solemnly own'd, not only that the Church is a spiritual Society, but ought also to be an orderly Society.

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(a) And withal have all along allow'd us, that Jesus Christ is the Head or Sovereign of this Society. Upon these Concessions, which naturally inferr the necessity of Authority (for Order can no where be, where there is not Authority in the Hands of those, who are to manage and conduct, support and maintain it) we might proceed directly to the Consideration of that Authority, which was communicated by that Sovereign to those, in whose Hands he Thought fit to leave the Administration of the Affairs of his Kingdom, and consequently endow'd with a delegated commission'd Authority, answerable and sufficient for the great and wise and good Ends he himself did intend it for.

But here we must stop a while in our Consultations: For though they own the necessity of Authority for preserving the Peace and Order of Society, yet to weaken and abate the Force and Power of Authority, and make it as useless and insignificant as they can; when we admit it to be a commi-

(a) Answ. to D. of W. Præf. p. 7. Book p. 6. 120. P. S. p. 227.

ssion'd Authority, though immediately delegated by God Almighty, they presently inferr upon us, that it cannot be *Absolute*, but being confin'd within the Terms and Limits of its Commission, ought not to be follow'd by our Submission and Obedience any further than the reasonable Dictates of our own private Judgment of Discretion will allow us. And thus they first set up the Idol of their own Reason, and then introduce upon us an universal Empire of Confusion.

The principle indeed of private Judgment of Discretion, is what must be own'd to be a natural Principle, implanted in us by God Almighty, and is the immediate Consequence of our being created reasonable Creatures; 'tis that Liberty of Will or Choice, which gives us the Comfort of Reward, when we use it well; or the Misery of Punishment, when we use it ill. Since then this is a Principle may be well or ill used; when we duly weigh the Corruption of human Nature, if we have any Regard either to the Duty of Mankind, or the Peace and Quiet of human Society, We shall find it highly necessary to consider well the Extent and Limits

mits of this Principle, and how far we may be allow'd to Act with safety under the Influence of it.

The Authority of God the Creator is own'd to be the most highly Supreme and Absolute; in him we live [*Exist*] and move (or should do in that regular Order his Providence has appointed us] and have, *i. e.* [*Enjoy*] our Being. This then is the only properly absolute Authority, from whence all other Authority is deriv'd, and therefore all other Authority being by its Nature dependent upon this, is under the Obligation of Duty to observe the command of that supremely absolute Authority, and may be safe in acting under it; because we are there certain of an infallible Guidance, as having Omniscience itself to Guard us from all Error; and Omnipotence to secure us from all infirmity.

Hence therefore is it, that all deriv'd Authority being seated in a limited and depending Creature, does necessarily lye under the Obligation of Duty, to observe the Commands of the only supreme and absolute Authority; and further yet, that Creature not being capable of those two
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great Attributes of the Deity; the Authority lodg'd with it, may in the Exercise of it become fallible, and therefore cannot properly be in the highest Sence, either absolute or uncontrollable, because both the Superior in his Commands, and the Inferior in his Obedience are under the Obligation of Duty to the supreme Commands of the only infallible Authority.

But yet there is a sound Sense, in which the subordinate deriv'd Authority may be properly enough term'd Absolute; for the supreme infallible Authority has thought fit, not only to govern us by the natural Laws, arising from the natural Dependences, but for the further Guard and Security of the Peace of Society, has been pleas'd to add his positive Laws, and by them has made the Duty of Obedience absolutely necessary to the higher Powers, whilst they Act within their Sphere, and do not transgress, contradict, or go contrary to the Commands of the Highest.

From hence therefore arises the proper Limit or Extent of the private Judgment of Discretion, as it relates to the Peace and Security of Society, for at present we
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need not trace it through all the intricate mazes of the Erroneous, The doubtful, and the scrupulous Conscience ; for they will come more properly under Consideration, when we come to vindicate the Orthodoxy of the *English* Reformation, in the Doctrine of Free-Will ; only give me leave to say at present, that Errors, Doubts, and Scruples are the product of Ignorance, and therefore ought to be remov'd by a speedy and better Information. They are at the best of them but pretences and excuses for the Crime of Disobedience, which how far they may be admitted, is the business of the Casuist, and will then come more properly under Consideration : In the mean Time as far as is sufficient for securing the Peace and Order of Society ; we may from these Principles, thus far settle the Limits and Extent of the private Judgment of Discretion, by inferring,

First, That all human Decisions, whether in the sacred or civil Polity, though they may be in their own Nature Fallible, yet while they are conversant within the proper Sphere of Action allotted to them, do by the positive Laws of God, become
absolutely

absolutely obliging to the Subject, and a Refusal of Obedience cannot in that Case be excused from the Crime of Disobedience: But then

2^{ly}. The subordinate Magistrate, as well as those under his Subjection, being equally under an Obligation of Duty, as has been observed, to the Supreme Commands of the absolute and infallible Authority of God; if the subordinate Magistrate break through his Duty, and transgress the Laws of God, by commanding any Thing contradictory or contrary to them; in that Case the Subject will not be under the Duty of Submission, (for the highest Power upon Earth cannot oblige us to sin against God) but may refuse his Submission without the Crime of Disobedience, and justify his Refusal by the Apostles Plea; *It is better to obey God than Man*: But then it must be, as they did, with the utmost Hazard of their Lives, Liberties, and Fortunes, if the angry mistaken Power requires them; for it is that alone, which makes the true Martyr of God. And therefore,

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3^{ly}. The Limit and Extent of the private Judgment of Discretion, is granted no further than as a Guard and Security to our selves, not as an Offence or Disturbance to the publick Peace of Society ; and in that Case only, where the mistaken Commands of our subordinate Superiors would by a Compliance with them, directly and manifestly, lead us into the Transgression of the Laws of our supremely absolute, infallible, and uncontrollable Lord and Governor. And therefore.

4^{ly}. The Private Judgment of Discretion can in no Case excuse the Refusal of Obedience to Human Authority, (tho' in its Nature fallible) from the Crimes of Disobedience ; but in that Case only, where Obedience to the subordinate Magistrate, would be directly and manifestly Sin against God : For in doubtful Cases, the Reason of Mankind, as well as common Modesty, ought to direct us to suspect rather our own Judgment, than the more maturely concerted Judgment of our publick Superior, where Sin against God by the Compliance, does not plainly and manifestly appear, lest we should by
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that Means fall under the blamaeble Characters of *leaning to our own Understandings* being *wise in our own Eyes*, Prov. iii. 5, 7. Being *wise in our own Conceits*, Rom. xii. 16. Being *Traitors, Heady, High-minded, resisting the Truth*; Men of *corrupt Minds, reprobate concerning the Faith*, 2 Tim. iii. 4--8. Which are such Characters, as we must confess, ought to submit us to the just Animadversion of our Superiors for the Disturbances of the publick Peace, either by Schism in the sacred, or Faction in the Civil Politye, and will certainly subject us to the Wrath of God, for the Breach of his positive Laws, who has commanded us to *submit our selves to the higher Powers*, because they are ordained of him, Rom. xiii. 1.

This Objection therefore of our modern *Epicureans* being removed, and the Property of Authority, to require Submission, sufficiently vindicated, without any Breach upon the true Rights of our natural Principle of private Judgment, we may, I hope, be allowed to proceed in our Consultation, and enquire what Authority, and in what Measure and Manner, our Saviour was pleased to leave in

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the Hands of those, with whom he thought fit to intrust the Administration of the Affairs of his Kingdom; where the great and leading Question will be, concerning that arrogant Claim the Bishop of *Rome* now makes to an universal Supremacy; which will directly bring us to the Consideration of our Third Assertion, *viz.*

III. That Jesus Christ never left one universal visible Head of that Body: Not St. *Peter*, nor consequently his Successors, supposing them to be such.

Now this being a Negative Proposition, the fairest and clearest Proof of it will be by asserting the contrary Affirmative, *viz.* That the rest of the Apostles had the same Power with St. *Peter*, and the same Title too of being Foundations. And by this Method we may sufficiently support, at the same Time, the Evidence both of the Third and Fourth Assertions.

Now, in clearing this Controversy, whereas *Bellarmino* tells us, (*b*) *Agitur de Sum-*

mâ Rei Christiana; it will be necessary to state first, what that Authority is, which the Bishop and Church of *Rome* do at present Claim, in Order to inquire, whether that Claim can be supported by any Grant of our Saviour; or was ever acknowledged either by the apostolical or truly primitive Fathers.

And here we must own, that from the first Establishment of a Christian Church in that famous City, which was then the Mistress of the World, upon Account of the greatness and splendor of the City, and its being the Seat of Empire, there were always allow'd to the Bishop and Church of *Rome* some Privileges of Respect, which we must further own were confirm'd to it under Christian Sovereigns, by two of the first four general Councils, and were call'd τὰ πρῶτεια, τὰ πρεσβεῖα some Kind of Primacy, of Order and Dignity, but then at the same Time they give us the Reason why they were granted, διὰ τὸ βασιλεύειν τὴν πόλιν ἐκείνην, and at the same Time also do under Penalty confine their Authority and Jurisdiction to their own limited Districts, which is a sufficient Evidence;

dence; they did not think of claiming an universal Supremacy. For Proof of this See. *Concil. Constantin.* 1. *Can.* 3. & *Chalced.* *Can.* 28.

Upon the same Account, and about the same Time the Throne of *Constantinople* was advanc'd, from being a Subject or Suffragan See to the Metropolis of *Heraclea*, to become the Patriarch of its own Metropolitan, because it was become the City of *Constantine*, and Νέα πόλις.

But see how dangerous a Thing it is to flatter Ambition, for these two contending Sees, being now become upon the Account of these external Privileges of civil Respect, Competitors of universal Empire, though we must acknowledge the Claim was first begun by the See of *Constantinople*: Yet in the Struggle for it, they so far disorder'd the primitive Polity, and antient Government of the Church, which, as we shall see hereafter, was first settled in the provincial Form, that at last the See of *Rome*, by the Assistance of an unnatural bloody Tyrant and Usurper, grasp'd the whole, and as the
Roman

Roman Empire, which seems to be the τὸ κατέχον of St. Paul, did by providential Degrees decay, so did they grow in Strength, till they seem to have fulfill'd that Prophecy of St. Paul, which we find 2 Thess. c. 2.

But when they had by these Steps arrived at what they now arrogantly call a plenitude of Power, and had advanc'd themselves even above the civil Power, from whence they took the first Rile of these ambitious Aims, by an unjustifiable Pretence of directing that in *Ordine ad Spiritualia*; they then begin to think of some other Principles for a colourable Pretence and Cover to this their exorbitant Usurpation.

Hence is it their Schoolmen and Canonists have ever since endeavour'd to defend this Claim, upon the Bottom of a divine Right, and found that Right upon our Saviours Grant of it to St. Peter, as the Prince of the Apostles, and deriv'd to them from him as being his only Successors in that Power and Principality. And thus is it the Council of Trent would oblige us to acknowledge, the Holy Catho-
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lick and Apostolick *Roman* Church, to be the Mother and Mistress of all Churches; and also to promise and swear true Obedience to the Bishop of *Rome*, as Successor of *St. Peter*, the Prince of the Apostles, and Vicar of Jesus Christ. Thus also *Belarmine* states the Controversy. (c) The Catholics do affirm, that *St. Peter* the Apostle was ordain'd or appointed by Christ himself, to be the Head and Prince of the whole Church instead of Christ. And that it is not only simple Error, but Heresy, to deny this Primacy of *St. Peter*, to have been instituted by Christ himself.

Upon this State of the Case which is authentically their own, and makes the Church look so unlike that Kingdom which our Saviour asserted to himself, that some have thought it not unreasonable to call it the Kingdom of Antichrist; I shall joyn Issue with them, and endeavour to shew.

(c) See *P. R. Lib. 1. c. 10.*

1st. That such an exorbitant Claim of Power, cannot be justified by any Grant of our Saviour.

2^{ly}. That it was never acknowledged, either by the Principles or Practice of the Apostles themselves.

3^{ly}. That it is not agreeable to either the Principles, or Practice of either the Apostolick or Primitive Ages that succeeded.

4^{ly}. That it is disowned by many of the most learned and considerable *Romanists*. First then,

That such an exorbitant Claim of Power, cannot be justified by any Grant of our Saviour.

When our Saviour had gathered a sufficient Number of Believers, and had opened the Substance of his Heavenly Message to them in his Sermon upon the Mount, in order to the Conversion of the *Jewish* World to whom his Coming was more particularly promised, we find his first Act of Jurisdiction was the Election of his Twelve Apostles, and giving them

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Commission to be his Assistants in propagating the Gospel, or the Kingdom of heaven, *Matth. x. Mark iii. Luke ix.* In this Grant of our Saviour, the Power granted by the Commission, and the Instruction given for the Execution of it, are equally conveyed to the whole Number.

After these Things the Lord appointed *other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his Face, into every City and Place where he himself would come, Luke x.* To these he gave the like Power and Instruction to *heal the Sick, and preach the Gospel of the Kingdom.* And to shew it was equally given to the whole Number, the Evangelist tells us, *ver. 17, the Seventy returned again with Joy, saying, Lord, even the Devils are subject to us through thy Name:* Thus far the Commissions of our Saviour were confined to the Country of the *Jews* only, with a Command not to go unto the *Gentiles*, nor to enter into any City of the *Samaritans*: But the Power granted by those Commissions was equally given to the whole Number, first to the Twelve, afterward to the Seventy: And therefore hitherto there is no Grant of our Saviour to any single Person. But

But when the great Design of our Saviour's Coming into the World, the universal Redemption of Mankind was perfectly compleated by his Death, and Resurrection, then the Power of his Kingdom were enlarged, and the Prophecy fulfilled, that he *should have the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the utmost Ends of the Earth for his Possession*: And therefore we must see how this Commission was granted.

St. Matthew reports it thus, Chapter xxviii. 16. &c. *The Eleven (for the Traytor Judas was now gone) went into Galilee, as Jesus had appointed, he appeared to them and said, All Power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth; Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo! I am with you always even unto the End of the World.* St. Mark thus. Chap. xvi. 14. *Afterward he appeared unto the Eleven and said unto them, Go ye into all the World and preach the Gospel to every Creature.* St. Luke reports it thus, Chap. xxiv. 33. *The two*

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Disciples going to Emmaus returned to Jerusalem, and found the Eleven gathered together and them that were with them, and as they reported their Journey, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them and said unto them, Peace be unto you. -- Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and rise from the Dead the third Day; and that Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preached in his Name among all Nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are Witnesses of these Things. Behold I send the Promise of my Father upon you, but tarrye in the City of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with Power from above. St. John reports it thus, Chap. xx. 19. The same Day at Even, the Doors being shut, where the Disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst and saith, Peace be unto you. -- As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed upon them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retained.

Thus far all the four Evangelists in their several Gospels, where they give us on set Purpose the Record of our Saviour's Com-

Commission, do all of them agree that it was granted in common to the whole Number ; and therefore the Claim of any supreme Prerogative to any single Person amongst them, cannot be justify'd from thence ; for when our Saviour himself does Preface his Commission with that solemn Affelevation, *all Power* is given me both in Heaven and in Earth, and then grants it in common to them all, where *all Power* is given, there can be none reserv'd to any single Person, neither St. *Peter*, nor any other.

But there are several occasional Passages in the Gospels particularly apply'd to St. *Peter*, by which they think our blessed Saviour intended for him a distinguishing Trust and Power Superior to that of the other Apostles. These particular Applications have indeed something distinguishing in them, but not the Grant of any Power, save what was given to all the rest of the Apostles. For if we consider St. *Peters* Character, as it appears either from his own History, or from the Opinion of others concerning him, we shall find him to have been a Person of a very fervent Temper of a warm, hasty, precipitant Zeal. And that Kind of Temper,

per, we may easily believe, would stand in need of Cautions, Exhortations, and sometimes Reprehensions, which we shall best discover and distinguish by considering the several Places they refer to, for the Establishment of this distinguishing Power.

They generally pass by the *περὶ ὁ* *Σίμων* in St. *Matthew's* Enumeration of the Apostles, because indeed there is no more in it but only this, that where there is a Number, there must be one first, another second, before you can come at the Number twelve. But they urge and insist upon that famous Passage, *Mat. xvi. v. 18, 19.* Now the Occasion of this Passage is thus recorded by St. *Matthew.* After our blessed Saviour's first Commission to his Apostles, to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, and confirm the Doctrine with Signs and Wonders; when they had made Experiment of their new Power, and were come together again, as they were journeying to *Cæsarea Philippi*, our Saviour took the Opportunity of asking them, how they found the Inclinations of the People, putting this Question to them, *whom do Men say that I the Son of Man am?* They return their
Answers

Answers in different Manners according as they had found. The plain Evidence of the Power and Miracles, had given the People an Apprehension of some great Person come amongst them, and therefore some say, *Thou art John the Baptist risen from the Dead.* Some Elias, who was expected by the *Jews*, to be the Fore-runner of the *Messiah*, and others *Jeremias*, or one of the *Prophets*.

Upon this various Report our Saviour proceeds to ask them, what *their* Opinion was of him. *But whom do ye say that I am.* The Question was not ask'd of St. *Peter* singly but of them all, they being agreed in the Faith of the *Messiah*, (for which See *Joh. i. 40. &c.*) return their Answer by the Mouth of St. *Peter*, *Thou art Christ the Son of the living God.* This true Confession our Saviour approves and confirms by his solemn Benediction, and upon this Faith does promise he will build his Church, assuring them by St. *Peter*, what Power he would hereafter give them, for the Compleating this Building, the Power of the Keys. Then charged he his *Disciples*, not St. *Peter* singly, but the whole Number, that they should tell no Man that he was *Jesus*
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the Christ. And then gives them the Reason why It was not yet proper, that this Faith of the *Messiah* should be publickly preach'd. Because for the compleating his Design, *He must go to Jerusalem, suffer many Things, be killed, and raised again the Third Day.* Here *St Peters* precipitant Fervour began to rebuke him, saying, *Be it far from thee Lord, this shall be not unto thee;* and put our Saviour upon the necessity of giving him such a Reprehension, as will I believe not be reckoned amongst his Prerogatives, *get thee behind me Satan.* In this whole Transaction, there seems to be nothing peculiar to *St. Peter*, but only his being Spokesman for the rest; and therefore from hence it is observable,

1st, That the Question was ask'd in general of them all, when the Answer was made and approv'd; the Prohibition not yet to publish it, was given to the whole Number of Disciples; and therefore *St. Peter* could be no more than, as *St. Chrysostome* calls him, the *πρόεδρος* the Prolocutor, the Mouth of the whole Body, or College of Apostles.

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2ly, The Return of our Saviour to their Answer by St. Peter, was intended equally for Them all; so *Origen in Loc. Hæc velut ad Petrum dicta, sunt Omnium communia.* So likewise St. Aug. de Agon. cap. xxx. *Cum dicitur Petro ad Omnes dicitur.*

3ly, In this whole Transaction there is no actual Grant, but a Promise only of Power to be given; which when it came to be fulfill'd in its due Time, was indeed given to St. Peter, but not to him singly or alone, but to the whole Number of Apostles equally, and together.

4ly, From the Consequence of this Passage, St. Peters Faith of the *Messiah* seems to be the weakest of any of them. For he seems yet to be under the common Mistake of the *Jews*, who expected a temporal *Messiah*, and therefore receiv'd that reprimand from our Saviour, *Thou art an Offence to me, thou savourest not the Things that be of God, but those that be of Men.* However therefore sincere his Affection for his Master might be, yet his Faith was very weak. He was not yet arriv'd at an *infallibility*.

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The next Passage they produce, is that of St. *Luke*, cap. xxii. v. 31. 32. This Passage is Part of that Conversation, which our Saviour had with his Twelve Apostles at his last Supper, and does indeed contain something that is very peculiar to St. *Peter*. But nothing that will Favour his peculiar Sovereign Prerogative; to shew this, we need only, as briefly, as we can put the History of the Context together.

v. 14. *When the Hour was come, he sat down and the Twelve Apostles with him; institutes the Sacrament of his Body and Blood; declares his being betray'd; upon a Strife amongst them, who should be the greatest, he cautions them against Ambition and worldly Dominion; but yet at the 28 ver. tells them, ye are they which have continu'd with me in my Temptations, and I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me. That ye may eat and drink at my Table in my Kingdom, and sit on Thrones judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Here the Power is granted to all the Twelve equally.*

And then indeed our Saviour does make a peculiar Application to St. *Peter*. So
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peculiar, that it is even Personal: A charitable Caution against that foul Apostacy, our Saviour knew he was ready to fall into, as appears from the very compassionate Form of expressing it *ver. 31. Simon, Simon, Behold Satan hath desir'd to have you, that he may sift you as Wheat, ver. 32. But I have pray'd for thee, that thy Faith fail not, and when thou art converted strengthen thy Brethren.* St. Peter's forward Assurance of himself makes him say, *Lord I am ready to go with thee both into Prison and to Death.* Our Saviour answers, *The Cock shall not crow this Day, before thou shalt deny me thrice.* From whence he went to the Mount of Olives, suffers his Agony, was betray'd by Judas, and here again St. Peter's precipitant Zeal smote the Servant of the high Priest. Our Saviour instantly Cures him, with a Reprehension to St. Peter; was led to the high Priests House, Peter follows afar off, there he denies him with Excreations, and while he yet spake the Cock crew; the Lord turn'd and looked upon Peter, Peter remembered the Word of the Lord, and went out and wept bitterly.

From this Passage I would only Remark these two Things, which are neither of them, I think, either clear or sufficient Evi-

dences of any infallible Authority, either in *St. Peter* or his pretended Successors

1st. That as *St. Peter* was the only One amongst the Apostles, who stagger'd in his Faith of a suffering *Messiah*, when our Saviour in the former Passage foretold his Sufferings to them. So here when he actually saw him in the Hands of his Enemies, and those Sufferings ready to fall upon him, he was the only One (except the Traytor *Judas*) who foully apostatis'd, and deny'd his Master, and if it had not been for the Charity of our Saviours Prayers for him in all probability had finally done so.

2^{ly}, That as his pretended Successors are not proud of following their Leader in the denial of their Master, so when they are convinc'd of that ambitious worldly Domination, which is forbidden by our Saviour; they should after *St. Peters* Example be converted, and according to our Saviours Advice, come in and strengthen their Brethren, in the Exercise of that just and equal Authority, which our Saviour has appointed to be exercis'd in his Kingdom, by all the true Successors of his Apostles.

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The *Last*, they urge, is that celebrated Passage, *John* xxi. where there is a reiterated Command expressing Power; and that Command given singly to *St. Peter*. But whether that Command express such a distinguishing Trust and Power, as was superior to all the rest of the Apostles, as they suppose, in Favour of an universal Supremacy; or whether it was only a cautionary Exhortation given particularly to *St. Peter*, as the only Apostle amongst them, who seemed to want it, and to give him the Opportunity of making some amends for that foul Apostacy he had been guilty of in denying his Master, must now be considered from the Circumstances of the Context, and the best Interpretation of it we can meet with, before the Claim of universal Supremacy was pretended to.

The Power it self here commissioned, *Feed my Sheep, Feed my Lambs*, is the same with the Power of the Pastoral Office, which was given to the Apostles equally with *St. Peter* in the Power of the Keys; and therefore is here a Repetition only of that Charge which was committed to *St. Peter* with the rest. This will appear by those Notes of Time the Evangelist here gives us, Chap. xx. 19.

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On the Evening of his Resurrection our Saviour appeared to his Disciples and gave them his Commission. ver. 26. After eight Days he appeared to them again, and confirmed Thomas.-- Chap. xxi. 14. This is now the third Time that Jesus shewed himself to his Disciples after his Resurrection from the Dead. At this third Time it was our Saviour gave this repeated Charge particularly to St. Peter, though other of his Apostles, to whom he had before committed the pastoral Care, were at the same Time with him. This shews it to be a repeated Charge of what was granted before, and particularly to St. Peter: But that it was not any Extension of his Privilege or Prerogative above the rest, but rather a cautionary Exhortation to Constancy and Faithfulness in his Trust, now again committed to him, notwithstanding his former Failures, seems to appear.

1st. From St. Peter's own Concern, for ver. 17. when our Saviour repeated his Question the third Time, *Peter was grieved, because he said unto him the third Time, Lovest thou me?* Now we are not used to be grieved for the Grant of Privilege and Prerogative: But St Peter had just

just Cause to be grieved when he apprehended by the Repetition of the Question, that our Saviour seem'd to suspect his Constancy and Fidelity, which had before been so often shaken. And this seems to be farther confirmed

2ly. In that our Saviour, to take off this Anxiety of Mind, immediately shews him by what Death he should glorify God ; by that Means, assuring him, he should now stand firm and constant, and die for the Faith. Nor are we singular in this Interpretation.

3ly. For St. Ambrose tells us. (d) *Qui enim Dominum tertio Negaverat, tertio confitetur, & quoties Culpam delinquendo contraxerat, toties Gratiam diligendo conquirat.* St. Chrysostome. (e) *Διὰ τὸ εἰσέρχθαι. μήποτε ἐγὼ μὲν νομίζω φιλεῖν, & φιλῶ δ' ἐ, ὥσπερ καὶ περὶ πολλὰ νομίζων καὶ διαχυρόμενος ἡλεγχάμην ὑστερον.* And St. August. (f) *Contristatus quod Eum non solum semel sed Iterum & tertio Interrogasti; Ut Trinâ Confessione Amoris, Deleteret Trinum peccatum Negationis.* These Circumstances of the Context, and these Authorities to which more might be ad-

(d) Serm. 48. (e) Chrysostom in Loc. (f) De-
verbis Dni. Serm- 50.

ded, seem plainly to determine the Intention of this Passage to have been no more than a cautionary Exhortation to *St. Peter*, who alone seem'd to stand in need of it, to continue constant and faithful in the Discharge of that Trust, which he with his Brethren had been equally intrusted with. Thus far, throughout the whole Evangelical History, we find no Footsteps of any singular Authority granted to *St. Peter* above the rest of his Fellow Apostles, and therefore may be allowed to conclude, That Jesus Christ never left one universal visible Head of his Body the Church. But to proceed, for the strengthening of this from the Records of the Apostolical Age, it may be sufficient at present to observe, *First*, That *St. Peter* himself did never claim any such Authority. *Secondly*, That the Apostles in reducing their Master's Commands into Practice, never did acknowledge it, but acted either Collegiately and in Common; or when separately, upon the single Right of the Titles of their Conversions: Which two Considerations will plainly shew us, That the present Claim of the Bishop of *Rome*, to an Universal Supremacy, was never acknowledged either by the Principles or Practice of the Apostles themselves.

F I N I S.